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Letter from W.B. Starke to Thomas G. Clemson, 1883 January 29

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A/
Cp 26.

Beech Is. S. C.
Jan. 29 1883

Col. T. G. Clemson
Pendleton S. C.

Dear Sir

I have received two letters from Winnsboro: one, the copy of a letter from Mr Hunter dated Jan 15 in which he expresses his determination reluctantly but decidedly to abandon the work he was engaged in of writing Mr. Calhoun's life; the other, a letter from Col. S. A. Rice in reference to Mr Hunter's withdrawal. Col. Rice's letter to me is as follows: "I sent you Mr. Hunter's letter. My time is so engrossed that I would be able to do very little to help you in completing the life of Mr. Calhoun. You will use me as Consulting Attorney. Besides, I could write two chapters -

"Mr. Calhoun on Slavery"

"Mr. Calhoun at Home"

I think with Mr. Clemson's acquaintance with Mr. Calhoun's views, and your own facility with the pen and the English language, and knowledge of antebellum politics, you could finish Mr. Hunter's work in a manner worthy of the subject. But I fear a long delay in getting Mr. Hunter's 1st volume and other materials I sent him to Mr. Clemson's direction, Mr. H. is difficult to move. You were pleased to say in your favor of Jan. 9th that you hoped it might suit me

with Col. Rion to bring the life of Mr. Calhoun to a close. These suggestions are ~~very~~ of flattering to me. I have given the subject much consideration. I should be obliged to give up all other business, for like Mr. Hunter I have to labour for a livelihood. Nor does my position here afford me the necessary means for such a work. To write so many pages by such a time would be a comparatively easy task, but to write the life of John C. Calhoun as it deserves to be written is a very different matter. It would be necessary to become thoroughly acquainted with what Mr. Hunter has written, for as to style and arrangement the writer of the concluding part must so adjust his own as not to form a disjointed work. "Time", says Mr. Hunter, "would be required not only for the composition, but for the study necessary to do it justice". Access to various books not to be found in my small collection would be necessary. We must all agree with Mr. Hunter that "the importance of a fair and complete life of that eminent man will increase with time". I am not so vain as to imagine that I could do that great man anything like full justice. A great use it seems to me would be accomplished in extending more widely through a fair life of Mr. Calhoun a knowledge of his character and particulars of his views for I am fully persuaded that in his doctrine of the concurrent majority, as the principle on which our government is founded, lies our only hope of safety. And should our government instead of its original form of a Federal Republic pass into that

of an absolute democracy - its present tendency -
Mr. Calhoun's ^{two} great works, on government and the
Constitution and government of the United States, will
still remain for the guidance of future legislators
in its original spirit and Federal System with its
checks and adjustments was a governmental innovation
unprecedented in importance and is destined to lead
to results hereafter, not at present generally suspected.
But I find my communication growing too lengthy.
I am growing more and more inclined to undertake the
completion of Mr. Hunter's life of Mr. Calhoun and if everything
can be suitably arranged I see no reason - barring
my incompetency - that could prevent me from undertaking
this work and bringing it to a successful completion.
meantime giving up for the present other engagements
I have commenced my study of the subject. I think that
perhaps my visit to you should be deferred until the
arrival of Mr. Hunter's volume with the accompanying
documents at Annapolis. I could then visit Col. Pickens
and proceed thence to Pendleton.

I wrote you, I believe, of my pleasant visit to Columbia and
Annapolis where I was in danger of being made sick
from the Christmas feasting. At home where I have
so much writing I live from choice very much
like an anchorite. A cup of coffee, and a ~~biscuit~~
biscuit for breakfast; a bit of fried bacon, a biscuit
and a glass of milk for dinner + a cup of
coffee for supper - more than this rather upfits me
for work

We have had nothing but rain for weeks and it finally resulted in a fresh east wind that threatened the city of Augusta.

With kind regards to Mrs. Quinn & Essie.

Very truly yours
Wm. P. Sparks

P. S. Col. J. C. Haskell has lately been elected Attorney for the Greenville and Columbia R.R. Road. Through him I might possibly get a free pass over that road as I have through Col. Rion obtained over the Columbia & Charlotte R.R. If this could be managed and you would permit me to visit you and use the library at Fort Hill whenever necessary I would then be able by my access to the University library and Col. Rion's to obtain the use of what books might be necessary. The writing could be done here. Upon receiving news of the arrival of the manuscripts at Cambridge I could go over and after inspecting them proceed with them to Fort Hill where we could inspect them together and talk over the whole matter.